

Celibate
Freedom, Responsibility, and Chaste Fatherhood

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*Glorify to the Father,
 and to the Son
 and to the Holy Spirit - . . .*

Meanings of Freedom

At the Eucharistic acclamation we often proclaim: "Lord, by Your cross and resurrection
You have set us free. You are the Saviour of the world!" From what does Jesus set us free?
 Our usual answer is that He sets us free from sin and from death. Since asking fundamental
 questions is part of human nature,¹ we might also ponder the question: How does He set us
 free? The answer again comes readily: by His Cross, by His Resurrection. Yet, when we think
 about the meaning of these words (as philosophers love to do), we may discover another
question welling up within us: Why does Jesus set us free if we are already created free in the
image and likeness of God with a free will ordered to the good, an intellect ordered to the true,
embodied, and in communion with others? In other words, if we are already free, why do we
need to be set free?

In this presentation I would like to ponder this mystery of the meaning of freedom with
 you, considering what freedom is and what it is not; where each one of us is free and where we
 are not. We will consider how our freedom is linked with responsibility, and how in the
Sacramental Priesthood, freedom and responsibility may open up new and radiant dimensions
 to the reality of chastity and the Paternity of Priests.
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There is an important challenge to be faced. How do we educate our freedom? How do
 we really become free? So many of us in the contemporary world stop educating ourselves when
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we finish our academic formation. We learn a little but are content to ride with this knowledge for the rest of our lives. We get so busy that we hesitate to take time to learn anything more. Yet deep down inside we have a great drive to learn the truth about ourselves. *Fides et ratio* recently defines the human being as: "the one who seeks the truth."² When we discover a truth, and integrate it, we come to understand it deeply. This is how educating ourselves about freedom will help to make us free. ~~So this time of meeting is a precious opportunity to begin a process of education again, or to continue what you have already begun. With this goal in mind, we can now turn to consider the meaning of freedom.~~

In contemporary culture there are many different meanings for freedom: we hear of many "freedoms of and freedoms to:", e.g. the right to free speech, right to carry a gun, freedom of movement, freedom of action, freedom of religion, freedom of choice (of job, of place to live, of whether or not to bear a child), freedom of association. We also hear of many rights to "freedom from:", e.g. freedom from tyranny, freedom from oppression, freedom from exploitation, freedom from slander, or freedom from discrimination. President Clinton even proclaimed the year 2000 as: "The Year of Freedom." The question is: What does "freedom" mean? Is its deepest meaning a freedom of something, a freedom from something, or a freedom for something or for someone?

Modern and contemporary philosophers have written much about freedom, and their views add to the complexity of the contemporary context. William James, one of the founders of American pragmatism suggested that freedom be divorced from objective truth. His exact words are: "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events."³ This pragmatic mentality can lead us to think

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or say something is true, it is true
erroneously that if enough people want something to be true, then it will become true. Another

misleading contemporary philosophy of freedom can be found in utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill, its founder, argued that we should calculate actions based on how much happiness they bring and how much pain they avoid for the greatest number of people. ^{Pope} John Paul II in his 1995 address to the United Nations directly connected this utilitarian mentality with a distortion of freedom when he said: "...Utilitarianism, the doctrine which defines morality not in terms of what is good but of what is advantageous, threatens the freedom of individuals and nations and obstructs the building of a true culture of freedom" because it tends to use people for one's own interest.⁴

Another distorted contemporary view of freedom can be found in the existentialism of Frederick Nietzsche, who divorced freedom both from objective truth and objective goodness. He declared that a man is free to revalue all values by saying: 'This is my truth, this is my good.'⁵ This relativist mentality in which all conviction falls into mere opinion ends up not so much releasing freedom as paralysing it with a dullness following from the attitude that if all values are self-determined, then no one value calls me to act. John Paul Sartre, a twentieth century existentialist went even further by radicalizing freedom with respect to time, so that it only occurs in escaping from the present moment.⁶ This mentality leads a person to think that his freedom is only found in doing things in the future and that he is trapped in the present which he needs always to flee. Others, following materialist or behaviourist models, have claimed that human beings are not free at all, but rather caught in forces outside of them. This attitude also leads to a paralysis of will because the person comes to believe that he cannot

* At conception the nature of a child is given, but it takes months, years before the operation of its faculties of intellect and will are fully developed. There enters an nature but not the operation. That is why we have free will. We ⁴ are never forced by God to choose one thing or another. He has our respect change. In this case, freedom becomes simply an illusion or empty feeling with no foundation

in reality.⁷

for the dignity of human freedom that he never coerces it.

Into this maze of uses and abuses of the word "freedom" Catholic thinkers have

articulated fundamental principles. One of the most important distinctions they make is between

1) a freedom of specification and 2) a freedom of exercise. The first meaning, or freedom of

specification, relates to the fact that God has given us the gift of free will -- specified as an

aspect of our human nature.⁸ This free will is described in #1730 of the *Catechism of the*

Catholic Church as the source of the dignity of the human person who can become master over

his own acts. This specified gift of human freedom is also cited in #1 of *Dignitatis Humanae*,

The Declaration on Religious Liberty of Vatican II, as the source of the great dignity of the

human person in society. Freedom of specification is a human potentiality contained in the act

of the soul which must become actualized to be effective.⁹ This leads us to the second meaning

of freedom, or freedom of exercise, freedom of operation.

Freedom must be exercised well for the full development of the person. Analogous to the way that muscles need to be exercised for physical movement, the will has to be exercised for a

person to grow in freedom. Without exercise both muscles and human freedom can atrophy.

Victor Frankl, philosopher and psychiatrist, describes a poignant moment when he and other

prisoners from a concentration camp stood before an open gate at the edge of the camp after

liberation:

...we shall pick up the threads of that part of our narrative which told of the morning when the white flag was hoisted above the camp gates, after days of high tension. This state of inner suspense was followed by total relaxation. But it would be quite wrong to think that we went mad with joy. What, then, did happen?

With tired steps we prisoners dragged ourselves to the camp gates. Timidly we looked around and glanced at each other questioningly. Then we ventured a few steps out of the camp.... We walked slowly along the road leading from the camp. Soon our legs hurt and threatened to buckle. But we limped on; we wanted to see the camp's surroundings for the first time with the eyes of free men. "Freedom" -- we repeated the word to ourselves, and yet we could not grasp it. We had said this word so often during all the years we dreamed about it, that it had lost its meaning. Its reality did not penetrate into our consciousness; we could not grasp the fact that freedom was ours.¹⁰

We will return to Victor Frankl's account later in the presentation, but for now we can grasp analogously the painful effects of lack of exercise of freedom.

Freedom and Responsibility

~~Those of us who live in a "free society" are responsible for exercising our will and growing in freedom.~~ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states in #1731 that we may grow "freer" by choosing the good. This may occur in two ways: first by choices of personal conversion in a particular area of weakness which lead to a greater depth of freedom of action in that area; and secondly, by expanding the breadth of unfree areas in our personality to work on. ^{See many sermons by Pope Francis on this example} For example, we may be driven by unexpected anger in particular situations. By choosing to pray for and strengthening our will to practice acts of meekness, our angry behaviour may become modulated and governed over time. Or, ^{following on the example} once we have become more free in relation to the passion of anger, we may expand our freedom into other areas of our personality by identifying prejudices we may have towards particular groups of people and exercising our will to overcome these group biases.

Many Catholic philosophers have written about different aspects of this effort to become more free. Jacques Maritain stated that full freedom of personality is gained only by education and intentional action grounded in the truth.¹¹ Karol Wojtyla claimed that ^{in his Acting Person} ~~the~~ person is integrated and actualized by performing certain kinds of actions.¹² Wojtyla argued that we have an experience of human freedom in an internal zone of our consciousness when we reflect about a possible action that "I may but I need not do it."¹³ Thomas Aquinas also notes this interior experience of human freedom when we find commands and free judgments of reason binding on us in the sense of "I ought to do this act, or I ought not to do this act."¹⁴ M. A. Krapiec describes a mirroring knowledge we have when we act. By comparing situations in which something in us rebels because we feel coerced with other acts in which we do not have this sense of being coerced, we can discover by experience the fact of our human freedom.¹⁵

Catholic philosophers have distinguished three frequently repeated basic principles with respect to the exercise of human freedom: 1) the free will is oriented towards the good; 2) freedom must be grounded in the truth as discovered by the intellect; and 3) truth is discovered in relations of communion as their "inner structure." Each of these principles will be briefly described reflecting on the theme of chastity.

del / First, it is a law of my human existence that I am inclined to the good, as towards my last end of happiness. This is the beatitude of eternal life in union with the Holy Trinity and saints in heaven. However, by another law of my human nature, I am limited to choosing particular goods. So the good I choose may not be the true good. I may make an error in judgment about the true good because of the effects of original sin or of the habit of sin which dulls my intellect and weakens my will. Thus I might erroneously decide that disordered sexual

relations are a proper expression of my charity or compassion towards a person in need. Or my passions of desire may simply sway my reason.¹⁶ In the latter case, I often invent a "pseudo-will" reflecting my disordered passion. I seek to fulfil my desires by sexual pleasure, avoiding the pain of loneliness or misunderstanding, or acting out of rebellion or depression. I decide to do what I want with whom I want when I want, and so forth. Or I may simply fall into sins against my promise of chastity out of tiredness, weakness, or fatigue. These conditions of weakness I use as an excuse not to exercise my will for a higher good. Therefore, I evade my responsibility with respect to the exercise of the freedom of my will.

In an extreme situation, as St. Augustine has so powerfully described in his Confessions, my will can become so addicted to disordered pleasure that it seems like a chain keeping me in complete captivity. "For my will was perverse and lust had grown from it, and when I gave into lust habit was born, and when I did not resist the habit it became a necessity. These were the links which together formed what I have called my chain, and it held me fast in the duress of servitude."¹⁷

Here the human person defined by Boetius & Thomas as an individual substance of a rational nature becomes an "assimilation" nature -

The goal of human responsibility with respect to the will involves becoming self-governing in relation to the passions. Gaudium et spes #17 describes this goal as follows: "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward towards his goal by freely choosing what is good, and by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end." This goal of self-mastery requires

human effort to exercise the will. This in turn builds virtue and opens increasingly larger ranges and depths of freedom.¹⁸ Self-governance demands choices based on true judgments.

Freedom must be grounded in truth discovered by the intellect. The *Catechism* states clearly that "Man tends by nature toward the truth."¹⁹ Veritatis splendor #84 emphasizes that the correct relation between freedom and truth is one of the most fundamental moral questions. This relation is so important that Catholic philosophers claim the human person is fulfilled only when freedom is united with truth.²⁰ [The two ways we discover truth have been beautifully described in John Paul II's recent encyclical *Fides et ratio*. In ^{the} an often quoted passage from the salutation of the document faith and reason are described like two wings -- the coordinated action of both are necessary to discover the truth about God and to come to the fullness of truth about oneself. We could say that truth is the "logic" of the exercise of freedom. The vision of our relation to the truth in *Fides et ratio* describes a dynamic process in which the human person yearns for the truth and seeks it. In the same moment,] Truth in the Person of Jesus Christ comes to meet the person, encountering him or her interpersonally, stirring the human reason and seeking an ascent of the will and act of entrustment in the One who is the Truth, that is, the One who sets us free. Thus truth is embodied, first in God who is the Truth and subsequently in the human person, who in relation to this truth becomes free.

Returning now again to the powerful testimony of Victor Frankl, his personal encounter with God enabled him to begin to exercise his freedom after his imprisonment in the concentration camp:

One day, a few days after the liberation, I walked through the country past flowering meadows, for miles and miles, toward the market town near the camp. Larks rose to the sky and I could hear their joyous song. There was no one to be seen for miles

around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the lark's jubilation and the freedom of space. I stopped, looked around, and up to the sky -- and then I went down on my knees. At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world -- I had but one sentence in mind -- always the same: "I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space."

How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence memory can no longer recall. But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being.²¹

Victor Frankl encountered God in this freedom of space which enabled him to discover who he truly was. It was a ^{very} graced moment.

Our conscience is an invaluable encountering point with the one who is the Truth, the One who seeks to set us free. { Most of us encounter the truth about our appetites in the heart of our conscience where we meet the practical voice of God's natural law. The first "precept" of the natural law, discovered in reason is: "do good and pursue it and avoid evil, or do this good and shun this evil."²² This practical judgment of our intellect "kicks in" before we do something, while we are doing something, or after we have done something.²³ } Since we are considering chastity in this presentation, we could say that our conscience may indicate to us the truth that "I should not do this particular act, or I should do this other particular act" here and now, or "I should not be doing this (How did I get myself into this situation?) here and now," or "I should not have done that act then" and so on.²⁴ We can see this encounter with truth in the moment of St. Augustine's conversion in the garden. No longer did Augustine hesitate to exercise his will as he had done previously when he prayed: "'Give me chastity and continence, but not yet.' For I was afraid that you would answer my prayer at once and cure me too soon of the disease of lust, which I wanted satisfied, not quelled."²⁵ With the help of grace and a

which enters into Augustine's nature -- but not into the operation of his free will, and with the help of

*greatest
man*
made a resolution of will
pure vision of the true value of continence, Augustine resolved to stop being controlled by his natural appetites and 'to arm himself instead with Jesus Christ.'

del One of the greatest difficulties facing us in the United States in this area is that the vast majority of people in our country do not even believe in the basic Christian virtue of chastity. Thus it becomes even more difficult to teach about the value of celibacy. The call to continent celibacy is an added burden for the Priest, for not only does he need to educate the conscience of those who come to him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and those to whom he preaches, he must also educate his own conscience! How is it possible to explain clearly the laws of educating the human conscience when the world is struggling to have even the most basic model of moral integrity? I as a woman religious take a vow of celibacy, and you as a priest accept a call to celibacy. We, like everyone, need to look at how we were formed in sexuality. We have in many ways been more formed by the secular world, than the truth, goodness, and beauty of human sexuality. We have also been formed by the prohibitions, without looking deeper to the truth behind them. We hope to be transformed by living our celibacy into the very life of the person of Jesus Christ. We have an obligation to practice the virtue of chastity let alone the great pinnacle of celibacy.

del Another goal of human responsibility with respect to the intellect is to become educated about the truth of God's law through the teachings of the Church.²⁶ The *Catechism* #1783 refers to the "indispensable" need for the education of the conscience by reason and by discovering the true good of the Creator. After educating the conscience then the will needs to obey the certain judgment of our conscience.²⁷ Finally, we need to accept personal responsibility for every act directly willed.²⁸

With these goals of personal responsibility in mind, and since we are involved in this workshop for priests, I would like to consider a particular issue of the meaning of chastity in relation to the ^{celibate} ~~chaste~~ fatherhood of Sacramental Priests. This is another challenging task. There seems to be a current need of many in society to eliminate paternity. Many women seek to reduce the male to a bio-chemical donor and then use this fact for their own purposes of becoming a mother. The person of the father, his spiritual qualities of intellect, will, ability to love appear increasingly irrelevant to some. At the same time, ^m Many men too have shunned responsibility for their children.

In the light of these cultural tendencies to increasingly reject fatherhood, it is important to remember that the first cause of all generation is God the Father. His Divine Paternity is the perfect spiritual act in ^{being this} generating the eternal Son. He is the perfect donor of ^{new} ~~new~~ life. Human fathers and mothers are secondary causes of new life. To the extent to which a human father participates in the ^a act of generation as spiritual act, he participates in the life-giving paternity of God the Father. This is an important point for priests to grasp, and it is an important reality for all men and women to reverence. It is helpful to realize that our analysis is moving in the opposite direction than the tendency to eliminate paternity. On the contrary, we are seeking to return paternity to its original dignity.

^{Celibacy} **Chastity and the Fatherhood of Priests**

In the document *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium* the Congregation for the Clergy states that the new evangelization involves a positive understanding of chastity flowing in all Christians from a "burning love for Christ and his Church."²⁹ This "love means fidelity"

and calls for constant conversion of mind and will, or, as we have expressed it, constant exercise of the dignity of human freedom.³⁰ How do these reflections on responsibility and chastity relate directly to the call to the Sacramental Priest to become a true father while living in celibacy? By drawing upon two sources of Pope John Paul II, the encyclical *Shepherds After My Own Heart* and *Holy Thursday Letters to My Brother Priests* and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1974) *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* we can draw out some important principles for our topic.

An ordained priest, by his vow of chastity becomes progressively conformed to Jesus Christ, who was chaste and pure. In *The Priest and the Third Millennium* # 2 this call is described in the following vivid terms: "The call to become, like Jesus, Hostia, underlies the compatibility of the commitment to celibacy with the priestly ministry in the Church." "Hostia" here has the meaning of sacrifice or sacrificial victim offered out of love for the redemption of others. No one possessed Jesus alone in His virginal life, everyone can possess Him. In the Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Formation of Priests, Pope John Paul II describes celibacy as having a crucial place in the configuration of the Priest to Jesus Christ as Spouse, as total self-gift to His Bride the Church. He describes the Church, as the Spouse of Jesus Christ, wishing to be loved by the priest in the total and exclusive manner in which Jesus Christ her Head and Spouse loved her. He concludes that priestly celibacy is the free and repeated gift of himself in and with Christ to his Church..."³¹ In the depths of his self-conscious being, the priest may come to know who he truly is. In his free self-determination, he gives himself unreservedly in love to his bride. The documents repeat over and over again that "Celibacy precisely is a 'gift of the Spirit.'"³² It is a divine gift of grace, a free gift of the self in love,³³ and even a "falling in

Save
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love."³⁴ As a gift of the Holy Spirit, it is important for the priest to pray for the grace or gift of celibacy, and to truly desire it with his will. The same is true for chastity.

In a recent homily on consecrated life given in Rome for the Jubilee Year of salvation, Archbishop Charles Schleck, csc considered the relation between women religious who become icons for the Church, the Bride of Christ, and priests who become the Servants of Christ in the world. While his homily focused mostly on the great "mysterion" or a visible sign of an invisible reality contained in a woman religious' bridal union of one Sp^rit with Christ, his reflections have application to our present discussion on chastity and the paternity of priests. I quote Archbishop Schleck here:

*an analogy
with
chastity
motherhood*

Thus in calling a woman to the public consecrated life in the Church, God will not -- I believe we can say -- cannot destroy or diminish that aspiration which He himself has implanted in the very make-up of every woman, motherhood. Rather, He brings it, must bring it -- provided she places no obstacle in the way of this grace [filled] activity -- to [reach] its perfect and fullest realization, as he did in the case of Mary at the foot of the Cross. To be pure and fully consecrated to God, and yet to have the heart and soul of a mother, is the unique wonder of Mary, but it is also the very heart of the mystery, the "mysterion" of the consecrated woman. It is a gift given to her, that is present in the very grace of the "call" itself, in much the same way as the fruit of a tree is already present in the seed of the tree itself. And that "grace" given, will die or grow in the woman called to the consecrated life, in the same measure and proportion as the "grace" of vocation dies or grows in her heart.³⁵

By analogy when a priest's vocation grows in his heart, the fruitfulness of his celibate love enables him to become a transfigured person in Jesus Christ, an icon "of Christ- the priest offering the sacrifice of Calvary in his person." In this way, the priest as the servant of Christ in the world comes to the fullness of his deepest aspirations to fatherhood.

John Paul II describes how the priestly identity opens up to fatherhood, or reveals its meaning in fatherhood when he says: "Celibacy, then, is to be welcomed and continually renewed with a free and loving decision as a priceless gift from God, as an "incentive to pastoral charity," as a singular sharing in God's fatherhood and in the fruitfulness of the Church, and as a witness to the world of the eschatological Kingdom."³⁶ As priests do you really see celibacy as a "priceless gift from God" or it is a ^{only} burden than you bear? There are two aspects of this description that need to be noted: the participation of the Priest in the spiritual fatherhood of God, and the priest's call to pastoral charity. We will consider each of these in turn.

How does the Priest share in the fatherhood of God and the fruitfulness of the Church? To answer this question, we need first to consider what we mean by Divine Paternity. God, the Father eternally begets His Beloved Son, the Word out of the goodness of his nature. God eternally generates out of love. This eternal incorporeal begetting is different from the generating of human fathers which is always material and limited by space/time. God eternally begets the Son and he continues to generate us. If God the Father does not continue to function as Creator and Sustainer of the world, we do not exist.

In a man, the operation of generation is separate from his identity. We do not usually like it if someone says we are just our operation or function, a student, a welder, or a father or even a seminarian for example. With God, however, it is different. His operation is his very self. His operation is the act of self-giving love and receiving love. His identity is to be Father eternally generating His Son, the Eternal Word. Philosophers call this the ontological Fatherhood of God. It is God's essential nature to be Father. God the Father is "eternally generative by nature."³⁷

Now we can draw out two essential principles of Divine Paternity: 1) active self-giving love to another and 2) active love which receives another. In God all is act. Nothing in God is potentiality. Nothing in God is passivity. God is the act of love in these dual dimensions of active self-giving and active receiving of another. In the letter of John we read: "God is love." (4:8,16). God's ontological identity is Love. Just as the self-giving eternal begetting of the Father is act, so also the exchange of love among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which the being of the Son is received by the Father is act.³⁸

The biological human paternity of a man also partakes of the identity of self-donation as a going forth out of himself towards another, a woman; and if there is a conception, towards the child. At the same time, since the conception of a human child is a material conception, it participates in the generative activity of God the Father as a simple trace of the Divine likeness in the material world. The more a father can participate in human generation through personal acts of his intellect and will, the more fully will He participate in the Primary Paternity of God the Father. It is this progressive or developmental sense of fathering which opens to the mystery of the Christian vocation or call to be a father.

To further this progressive sense of generating, let us consider the example of Mary at the annunciation. Philosophers such as Augustine, Thomas, and John Paul II describe her fiat as conceiving Jesus Christ in the mind in an act of will and intellect, before she conceives in her body. John Paul, following St. Augustine, summarizes this in his encyclical *Mother of the Redeemer*: "She conceived this Son in her mind before she conceived him in her womb..."³⁹ This is an important point to note and it has analogical application to human fathering. Human generation, the more it participates in the nature of a human act, of exercise of intellect and will,

the more it will participate in the Primary Paternity of God. This is why human fathers who
 ✓ adopt a child are real fathers by their acts, and why Priests are real fathers by their acts.

St. Joseph's fatherhood brings us also into the mystery of the prime spiritual meaning of
fatherhood. Divine Paternity is Primary Paternity, and human paternity is participation in
Primary Paternity. To the extent that human paternity expresses human acts of choice,
knowledge, and self-gift this participation will become more perfect, more fully of love, and
holy, and share more of the generative aspects of the reign of God. Joseph's adoptive fatherhood
of Jesus reveals the characteristic of the total gift of self in life and work in a hidden
guardianship of the Word made flesh. St. Joseph discovered the depth of his fatherhood through
the events of life. Let us recall briefly some of these key moments.

At first St. Joseph had decided to not marry the pregnant woman to whom he was
 engaged. According to some traditions, in a sense Jesus was the "unwanted child." However,
 the angel jolted Joseph into accepting his fatherhood ^{1 adoption by} revealing who ¹ was actually responsible for ^{the conception of}
Jesus. ^{ie. The Holy Spirit} He had to adopt this woman and this child to become a father. As we find in the
 document on *St. Joseph Guardian of the Redeemer* #20 "From the beginning Joseph accepted
 with the 'obedience of faith' his human fatherhood over Jesus. And thus, following the light of
the Holy Spirit who gives himself to human beings through faith, he certainly came to discover
every more fully the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood."⁴⁰

In another crucial experience in the life of St. Joseph we find him later abruptly oriented
away from the prerogatives of his own fatherhood towards the prime paternity of God, The
Heavenly Father. Recall the passage from Luke when Jesus was lost from his parents for three
 days, teaching in the temple. In Scripture we read that his mother Mary said to him: "Son why

have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously," --- referring to Joseph as his earthly adoptive father, but Jesus answered: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk. 2:49) ---referring to his Heavenly Father Abba. In this short conversation, which Joseph only overheard, he was sharply reminded who Jesus' Primary Father is.

Now, it is possible to understand how ^{analogically} analogous to the fatherhood of St. Joseph Priests are celibate fathers. By accepting in the obedience of faith to wed their bride, the Church, and by spiritually fathering the children of God by adoption into the relation of the Son and Eternal Father by baptism, the fruitfulness of priestly celibacy becomes a gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals the Son to us; and the Son reveals the Father. "Priestly celibacy is a communion in the celibacy of Christ," and it issues in the spiritual fruitfulness of Christ's mission on earth.⁴¹ Priestly celibacy builds up the reign of God.

John Paul II describes further ways that the priest, in self-gift to his Church, becomes a true father: "Through his celibacy, the priest becomes 'the man for others,'" in a different way from the man who, by binding himself in conjugal union with a woman, also becomes, as husband and father, a man 'for others,' especially in the radius of his own family: for his wife, and, together with her, for the children, to whom he gives life. The priest, by renouncing this fatherhood proper to married men, seeks another fatherhood..."⁴² In the Person of Christ, the Priest sacramentally brings children to birth through Baptism, and he provides for them through the Word and Eucharist. In his own person, he protects them by a life of virtue and service.

In *Norms for Priestly Formation* we find natural fatherhood and spiritual fatherhood compared: natural fatherhood has "an altruistic spirit, the assumption of heavy responsibilities,

a capacity for love and a dedication enough to make any sacrifice, daily bearing of life's burdens and difficulties, and prudent care for the future." Yet the fatherhood of Ordained Priests is described as being "even more responsible and heroic."⁴³ When lived well, it participates in the Divine Paternity of God by its acts of will and intellect poured out in a life of charity.

The Holy Father states unequivocally that the Priest is called to be "a man of charity."⁴⁴ What is this Pastoral Charity which is the paternal dimension of the celibate priesthood? John Paul II describes some of its characteristics in a priest as follows: He feels compassion for those harassed and helpless, he goes in search for those who stray, he joyfully welcomes their return, he gathers and protects, he spreads a table and nourishes with his own life, he offers his life for others. Pastoral charity flows from the configuration of the priest to Christ, the Good Shepherd.⁴⁵ The essence of pastoral charity, according to John Paul II flows from the total gift of the self to the Church, and its highest realization is in the Eucharist ^{Here} where Bridegroom and Bride celebrate the Sacrament where Christ Jesus makes present once again the sacrifice of the cross.⁴⁶ In this action we see how and why "[t]he ministerial priesthood demands a special kind of love, which is called pastoral charity, by which a priest endeavours to give his entire life for the salvation of others."⁴⁷

In *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium* #3 the pastoral charity is described as "indispensable for a fruitful exercise of the ministry." From Pope John Paul II we learned that identity resides in becoming an acting person, in man's doing something in a particular way and in being fulfilled in act. Celibate Priests for the kingdom of heaven fulfil their vocation which is to live the life of the perfection of charity, transfigured through and in Christ. To become progressively transfigured into Jesus Christ is to realize a fuller humanity. For a man,

to discover -- through the ^{ing}masculine offer of his identity as Bridegroom for the Church, ~~his bride~~ -- the wonderful fruitfulness of a genuine fatherhood. We see in this the fulfilment of Jesus' promise in the Gospel, to receive a hundredfold brothers, sisters, mothers, and children. (Mk. 10:29ff)

All Christian fatherhood spends some time on Mount Calvary. Jesus told us that who ever sees Him sees the Father. In the Gospel of John, the night before He died, Jesus shared with his Apostles that He was about to enter into His glory in a new way. In freely laying down his life for those he loved, He prayed the following words: "Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was." (Jn 17:5) This is the glory of the Primary Paternity of God, the Father who poured his love into His Beloved Son. This is also the glory of being a father of a human child. This is the glory of being an adoptive father of a human child. And this is the glory of being a spiritual father as an ordained Priest. This glory goes forth in love to others. It provides, it nourishes, and it protects another even to the death of self. This is the vocation of all men to discover the glory of becoming evermore fully a father in the image and likeness of God, our Father.

In *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium*, the vocation to share in the glory of Christ's offering on Calvary draws upon a teaching of St. Gregory Nazianzus as follows:

...every priest [must] rediscover the absolute need for personal sanctity. "Before purifying others, they must purify themselves; to instruct others they must be instructed; they have to become light in order to illuminate and become close to God in order to bring others closer to Him; they have to be sanctified in order to sanctify." This commitment is made concrete in a profound *unity of life* which leads the priest to be and live as another Christ in all the circumstances of his life.⁴⁸

Now we may return to the Eucharistic Acclamation cited at the beginning of this presentation: "Lord, by Your cross and resurrection, You have set us free." ^{you} Those priests configured to Christ in self-gift to the Church, become spiritual fathers who reveal the true glory of their identity, in a transfigured existence. ^{you} They will radiate an ontological fatherhood which participates in the Fatherhood of God. If you want to get a glimpse of the Fatherhood of God, when you are living chastely in a unity of life, look in the mirror and you will see. That is why we call you Father.⁴⁹

ENDNOTES

1. *Fides et ratio*, #1
2. John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, #28.
- 3. William James, "Pragmatism's Concept of Truth," in *Essays in Pragmatism*, 161.
4. John Paul II, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly (October 5, 1995), #12.
5. Frederick Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I.15 and II.11-12.
6. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* on the for-itself which always escapes the present moment into the future.
7. See *Veritatis Splendor*, #31-33.
8. *Veritatis Splendor* #38.
9. *Veritatis Splendor* #39.
10. Victor Frankl, *Modern Man's Search for Meaning*, 87-88.
11. Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 10-12.

12. Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 112.
13. Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 100-101.
14. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, Q. 83, art. 1.
15. M.A. Krapiec, *I-Man: An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology*, 191.
16. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II, Q. 10, art. 3.
17. Augustine, *The Confessions*, Book VII.5.
18. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1767 and 1804.
19. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2467.
20. Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 175.
21. Frankl, *Modern Man's Search for Meaning*, 90.
22. *Veritatis splendor* #54 and 59.
23. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1778 and 1780.
24. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1778.
25. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.7.
26. *Veritatis splendor* #35.
27. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1790 and *Veritatis splendor* #34.
28. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1736.
29. Congregation for the Clergy, "The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium, : Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments, and Leader of the Community, #1-2.
30. Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium*, #3.
31. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #29. Incorporated into *The Priest and the Third Millennium*, #2.
32. John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to my Brother Priests*, (1979), 35.
33. Norms for Priestly Formation, 160.
34. Norms for Priestly Formation, 170.

35. S.E. Mons, Charles Schleck, csc, "Homily for Fourth Sunday of the Year (B) at the Vesper Service at Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe," January 30, 2000.

36. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #29.

37. See Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 184. See also, chapters 8-9.

38. This active receptivity of the Father's love can be noted in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. See, John Paul II, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son," *Dives in Misericordia* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1980), #5ff.

39. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1987), #13.

40. John Paul II, *Guardian of the Redeemer*, #20.

41. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, "A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy," (1974), *Norms for Priestly Formation*, (Washington DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1982).

42. John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to my Brother Priests*, (1979), 35.

43. Norms for Priestly Formation, #32, 172.

44. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #49.

45. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #22.

46. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #23.

47. Norms for Priestly Formation, 160.

48. Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium*, Conclusion, incorporating St. Gregory Nazianzus, *Orationes* 2,71: PG 35, 480B.

49. I am very grateful for suggestions for revision for this paper from Very Rev. Samuel Aquila and Rev. Phillip Larrey, St. John Vianney Theological Seminary and from various members of the Religious Sisters of Mercy.